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Swedish Church Accepts Ordination of Women

(Malmö) - The Church of Sweden has agreed to accept women as ordained ministers. Its Church Assembly decided on September 27, by a majority of 69 to 29, following an act of parliament that had previously caused fierce controversy within the church (see EPS Nos. 15, 27, 30 and 31).

The minority voting against the acceptance of women was led by Bishop Bo Giertz and claimed that the measure was unscriptural. An attempt to find a "constitutional third way" to settle the controversy, with postponement of ordination for two years, was led by Bishop Anders Nygren, who retires as head of the Lund diocese on October 1. The compromise plan was rejected, after being attacked in the assembly by some members of Swedish women's organisations, including the Church Council of Women and the YWCA.

Although the debate lasted two days, observers said that few new points were raised. Elections to the Church Assembly early this summer changed its composition by naming new members who were in favour of ordaining women.

In spite of earlier predictions that the strong opposition led by Bishop Giertz would result in a "split" in the Church of Sweden (see EPS No. 27), Bishop Giertz spoke in the assembly with reserve and promised that, in spite of the passing of the measure, he would try to maintain the church's unity. He said, however, that he disliked having to work in a church that went "against scripture".

Although a report on the practice of churches in other parts of the world was submitted by the WCC at the request of the Church of Sweden, ecumenical considerations did not play a large part in the discussion. Advocates of the ordination of women said that the ecumenical situation indicated that each church should act on its own responsibility, while opponents argued that the present differences on the issue within the ecumenical movement favoured maintenance of the status quo.

Under the new practice permitting ordination of women, no bishop, minister or congregation will be required to ordain women or receive women ministers against their conscientious convictions. Women requesting ordination will apply to a bishop, who may or may not accept such applications. E.P.S., Geneva

US Church Begins Desegregated Housing Project

(Cleveland) - The United Church of Christ has announced plans for a nine million dollar experimental project in desegregated housing in a still-to-be-named city in the northern part of the United States.

The project, voted by the church's Council for Christian Social Action, "is not aimed at block busting and pushing minorities" but rather at "an open market where people can buy homes in all areas of the city according to their economic ability to buy, without regard to race".

"Careful preparation," the Rev. Chester L. Marcus, the council's race relations secretary, said, "will enable a community to stabilise property values and provide opportunities for new residents". Plans call for employing an "expert professional leader" to work with the local council of churches in the chosen city, individual churches and members, and interested community agencies.

The United Church of Christ was formed last year by a union of the Congregational Christian churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

E.P.S., Geneva

Appeals Made for Pakistan, Brazil, Korea

(Geneva) - Three appeals to aid flood and drought victims in various parts of the world have been issued by the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches.

Floods in West Pakistan have damaged more than 600 villages and affected 13,000 families, according to cabled reports received from Karachi.

In Brazil, a drought has "claimed the lives of several thousands of people, especially children", according to a report received from the Evangelical Confederation there, and two million people are reported to be facing starvation. "The needs extend far beyond our abilities to supply within the country," the confederation said.

The Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees also appealed for help to aid flood victims in Korea where a whole community of 15,000 refugees living in the Han River settlement north of Seoul lost their shacks and all their possessions in September. The mayor of Seoul has offered land for new refugee housing and help is needed to finance the project. E.P.S., Geneva

Plans Announced for United Ministerial Training in Africa

(Dahomey, French West Africa) - Plans for opening a united theological college in 1961 for French West Africa and Togoland have been made by representatives of the Evangelical and Methodist churches there.

Other missions in the two countries are being invited to attend a meeting in the Ivory Coast next year to make further plans for the college. Training will be at pre-university level, and it will be possible for some students to continue their study at a proposed university level Faculty at Yaoundé in the Cameroons. Nine churches from six French-speaking African territories announced plans last June for founding a French-speaking theological institution to serve all of French-speaking Central and West Africa (see EPS No. 28).

E.P.S., Geneva

United Church of Canada Discusses Presbyterian Merger

(Ottawa) - The General Council of the United Church of Canada has been directed to turn its attention toward possible union with the Presbyterian Church in Canada after council delegates heard reports that an "unmistakable apathy" exists toward merger of the United Church and the Anglican Church.

The report to the General Council at its meeting in September in Ottawa said that the "time has come when the Anglican Church should make it plain whether it really wishes to continue these conversations or whether it now desires to terminate them". Union discussions between the two bodies were started fifteen years ago. Turning to the possibility of union with the Presbyterian Church, the council pointed out that it was "a sister church". The Presbyterians stayed out of the union with the Methodists and Congregationalists in 1925 when the United Church was formed, but about 70 per cent of the Presbyterian congregations in Canada have joined in the merger.

In other action, the council renounced war "as an instrument of national policy", and called for the Canadian Committee on the Church and International Affairs to "press for an international agreement halting all nuclear tests on the grounds that they endanger the healthy survival of the human race".

The Rt. Rev. Angus J. Macqueen has been elected moderator of the United Church. The youngest moderator in his church's history, he has been pastor of First-St. Andrew Church in London, Ontario. E.P.S., Geneva

Missouri Synod in Canada Sets Up Independent Church

(Winnipeg) - The first independent Lutheran Church was set up in Canada in September by the withdrawal of the 73,000 members of the Missouri Synod in Canada from their parent body in the United States.

Officials of the church said the new group would, temporarily, receive trained pastors, funds and education materials from the United States church, but complete self-support is the goal. The Missouri Synod decision to set up a new church followed a meeting of the seven synods of Canadian Lutheranism (see EPS No. 35) to discuss establishing a united Lutheran church. There are 240,000 Lutherans in Canada. E.P.S., Geneva

Seventy-Five at WSCF Training Course in Africa

(Aburi, Ghana) - About 75 persons took part last month in the first Leadership Training Course in Africa to be sponsored by the World's Student Christian Federation. Discussion topics included "Witnessing to Christ in University, College and School", "The Church and the Student Christian Movement" and "The World and the University". The purpose of the course was to train African leaders for the Student Christian Movement.

The meetings were held at the Presbyterian Teachers' Training College in Aburi, and representatives were present from Dakar, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Togoland, Dahomey, the French Cameroons, Gabon and South Africa. It was announced that Miss Inga-Brita Castrén of Finland has been named WSCF secretary for Africa.

E.P.S., Geneva

Danish Baptists in US Vote to Disband

(Clarks Grove, Minnesota) - The 2,250-member Danish Baptist General Conference of America has voted to disband and the denomination's 83 churches have been welcomed into the American Baptist Convention.

Danish Baptist work in the United States began in 1856 among Danish immigrants, but in recent years it has been rare for services in the churches to be conducted in Danish and many local churches already belonged to the American convention.

E.P.S., Geneva

Ecumenical Scholarship Programme Announced

(Geneva) - Applications for 140 ecumenical scholarships should be received between January 1 and March 1, according to an announcement from the Scholarship Committee of the World Council of Churches' Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees.

Designed to "strengthen the common life and ecumenical consciousness of the churches", the programme is open to men and women preparing for full-time Christian service and who have completed most of their basic theological study: pastors and candidates for the ministry, and persons preparing for other forms of full-time employment in the Church, or related organisations.

Applications must be received in Geneva before January 1 for places in Canada and the United States, before February 1 for places in European countries and before March 1 for places in Asia and for the Graduate School of the WCC's Ecumenical Institute.

Also available are a limited number of World Council Fellowships, intended primarily for young theological professors or advanced students.

E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

The cornerstone for the \$20,000,000 Interchurch Centre in New York City will be laid on October 12. Scheduled for completion by December 1, 1959, the building will house many denominational and interdenominational church agencies, including the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and the US Conference for the World Council of Churches.

Dr. G.K.A. Bell, former Bishop of Chichester and the honorary president of the World Council of Churches, is reported to be seriously ill at Canterbury, England.

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A series of monthly radio dramas on the life of Christ has been broadcast over the Malayan government radio network by the Malayan Christian Council. Chinese, Indian and European Christians took part in the series, "The Man Born to Be King".

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The number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Communist countries has doubled in the last ten years, according to a report made to 12,000 Witnesses attending a meeting in Berlin. The report added that the growth was despite the fact that 2,000 men and 1,000 women members had been arrested in the East Zone of Germany since 1950.

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Miss Ruth Black, World Council of Churches' Service to Refugees senior field representative in Beirut, Lebanon, has been awarded the Order of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The award was made at a ceremony marking the dedication of a refugee project at Hadath, near Beirut.

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The General Synod of the Lutheran Church in Madagascar has approved the proposed membership of the new Madagascar Christian Council in the International Missionary Council (see EPS No. 35). The Lutheran Church, with 208,000 members, is the third largest non-Roman Catholic denomination in Madagascar.

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The third in a series of Protestant-Catholic talks on publicity questions has been held at the Evangelical Academy of Tutzling, Germany. The meeting was greeted by Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hannover and by Roman Catholic Bishop Kamptz of Limburg, who called division between the confessions "a red-hot iron which still causes suffering" and expressed hope for better understanding.

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A campaign of evangelism and healing conducted by American evangelist T.L. Osborn has been criticised in Dutch church circles. The national health inspector at Gröningen and Drente, who attended two meetings, described the evangelist's "healings" as "extremely controversial and impossible to prove".

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Correction: (Moscow) - In the list of representatives who took part in the conversations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the WCC in August (see EPS No. 32), Michael of Smolensk should have been listed as Bishop and not as Archbishop. E.P.S., Geneva

Special ReportLatin European Protestants Ask for Fuller Unity

Eighty officially-appointed delegates from Protestant churches in six Latin countries of Europe have agreed that "unity between our churches and evangelical groups must be made a reality everywhere and as fully as possible. Our hope," went on the official statement on "Unity", adopted in closing sessions of the conference of Latin countries' Protestant churches at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, "is that as this unity is realised among us, it may have repercussions in territories abroad where our churches undertake missionary work".

The statement began by affirming that real unity had already been given to the churches in Jesus Christ, and that ways of manifesting it had to be found. The delegates affirmed that the existence of divisions could only "invalidate our witness".

Drawing attention to the fact that the factors dividing the churches were also present within individual Christian groups in each country, the conference called for each church and group to stand ready to abandon some of its "sovereignty" for the sake of deeper unity.

An appeal was made for churches and evangelistic agencies from abroad to send missionaries into Latin countries only by agreement with the churches and groups in the country where they intend to start work.

The conference, which brought more than 150 churchmen to Le Chambon, was requested by the churches, and was supported by the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches. Present were representatives from churches in France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Portugal and Belgium (see EPS No. 35).

The conference adopted resolutions arising out of the statement, expressing dissatisfaction with the "ecclesiastical status quo" in Latin countries, and calling for the working out of methods of closer united action. "We undertake to work ceaselessly," said one resolution, "in our respective countries, for any closer contact, any understanding, any coordination, and, if possible, any federation or union, of a kind that will make our spiritual unity a public reality; and we give this understanding because 'we have all been baptised into one Spirit to form one Body'."

After taking similar undertakings about cooperating more fully with each other across national frontiers, the delegates agreed to establish a continuation committee which will meet from time to time and act as a centre for exchange of information and a review of progress. Consisting of one representative from Belgium, Italy, Portugal, France, Spain and Switzerland, the committee will have the right to accept nominated substitutes in place of delegates and will be responsible for arranging future meetings.

Members of the committee are Dean Jean Cadier, Montpellier, France, Monsieur Emile J. Molinghen of Belgium, Professor Giorgio Peyrot, Rome, Italy, Pastor Luiz C.R. Pereira, Portugal, Pastor Humberto Capo, Mallorca, Spain, and Pastor Robert Cand, Neuchâtel, Switzerland. Professor Cadier, of the theological faculty at Montpellier, was elected chairman of the committee. Montpellier will be the committee's address.

A warning was issued against "the spirit of denominational competition" in evangelism, which "has in view as a first aim the numerical growth of one's own denomination", but the conference added that it was important for "everyone reached by the evangelical message to be led to a community of his own choice, where his awakening faith may be strengthened and sustained".

According to the conference, every effort should be made to overcome the obstacles to church union presented by factors of small doctrinal importance. When such obstacles could not be overcome, the delegates said that every effort should still be made for better understanding and cooperation between divided Christian groups.

The statement of the conference closed by saying: "All of us are resolved to submit our existing structure at all times to the authority of Jesus Christ, to look at it again in terms of our missionary cohesion, and not to permit our ecclesiastical susceptibilities to interfere with the work God wills to carry out".

In Other Action

Other statements were issued by the conference on Evangelism, Religious Liberty, Protestant-Roman Catholic Relations and Christian Service.

After issuing a caution against the kind of evangelism in Latin lands that is "often conceived as polemic proselytism animated by a kind of spiritual pride and by oversimplified conceptions of Roman Catholicism", the evangelism declaration noted the temptations of Christian division, excessive "individualism", self-absorption and resort to "specialists".

Among demands included in a statement on religious liberty was a request for legislation and administrative practice to be brought in line with the provisions of national constitutions dealing with this subject. The implied reference is to existing situations in Italy, Spain and Portugal, where Protestants have sought full constitutional rights for some years. Specific allusion is made to employment, marriages and freedom to choose forms of religious instruction. Full legal rights and status are also sought for church bodies.

A much-debated report on Roman Catholic-Protestant relations reaffirms the vocation of Latin Protestants to "bring to our contemporaries the message of the Gospel in a spirit stripped of all sterile polemic and upheld by true love".

A report on Christian Service dealt with the concerns of the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the WCC, which supported the conference. In an introductory speech on the theme, Dr. Henri Ochsenbein, director of home mission for the Strasbourg Evangelical Society, emphasised that no theological faculties in Latin countries have full-time teachers in Christian social service.

E.P.S., Geneva

